

National Fixture Planning Committee – Congress Motion 2013

1. Introduction

The National Fixture Planning Committee (NFPC) have been working since 2011 on a scheduling proposal to try to address a number of recurring Fixtures issues that crop up during the summer inter county Championship season.

These include:

- the Length of time between games for counties eliminated in the early rounds of the provincial championship
- the 6 day turnaround for beaten provincial finalists
- the Spread of games/number of games per weekend in the Championship
- the general impact the current championship structures have on club activity In Counties

Through its work with county and provincial fixture planners, the NFPC have repeatedly been told that one of the most significant impediments to the scheduling of Club Championship games during the summer months, is the uncertainty surrounding the scheduling of inter-county championship games (i.e. in the early rounds of the provincial championships, the date for any county's next game is invariably dependent on whether they win or lose their provincial encounter)

To this end the NFPC sought to develop a proposal that would align the scheduling of games in the early rounds of the provincial championships so that whatever the result a county would play their next game (in either the qualifiers or the Provincial championship) on the same weekend.

2. Hurling Championships

This can be achieved in Hurling simply through adjustments to the scheduling of games and by greater co-ordination in a scheduling context between the provincial competitions and the various rounds of the All Ireland Championship. There is no requirement for a Rule Change in this context with regard to the Hurling Championship. The document attached as Appendix II shows how the hurling and football championships can be scheduled in such a way as to ensure the objectives outlined above can be achieved.

3. Football Championships

However in football, a rule change is required as the only way that the provincial championships and the Qualifiers can be satisfactorily aligned in a scheduling context is by creating two different sides to the Qualifier Draws and linking them to the two sides of each provincial championship.

Each round of the Qualifiers would then be played over two weekends – all of the Round 1a games on one weekend; all of the Round 1b games the following weekend and so on.

4. How will this work in practice?

The details of how the championships will operate are outlined in the Motion attached to this document as Appendix I.

In summary however, a given County's qualifier route through the All Ireland Championship will be determined by the annual Provincial championship draw. A sample draw, **based on the 2012 Championships**, is outlined on the next page;

	Ulster			
PR			Cavan v Donegal	
QF	Monaghan v Antrim	Fermanagh v Down	Donegal v Derry	Armagh v Tyrone
SF	Down v Monaghan		Tyrone v Donegal	
Final	Donegal v Down			

	Leinster			
R1	Westmeath v Louth	Longford v Laois	Meath v Wicklow	
QF	Dublin v Louth	Wexford v Longford	Carlow v Meath	Offaly v Kildare
SF	Dublin v Wexford		Meath v Kildare	
Final	Dublin v Meath			

All Ireland Series 2012 [Sample]

1A	Pot1: Westmeath, Laois, Louth, Longford, Fermanagh, Roscommon, Waterford, Antrim An open draw shall then be made to determine the four pairings
2A	Pot1: Wexford, Monaghan, Galway Limerick Pot 2: Four Winners from Pot1A A Draw shall be made to determine the four pairings – Pot 1 v Pot 2
3A	Pot1: Four Winners from 2A Draw shall be made to determine the two pairings. Subject to the avoidance of Repeat Pairings where feasible
4A	Pot1: Clare, Down Pot 2: Two Winners from 3A Draw shall be made to determine the two pairings. Subject to the avoidance of Repeat Pairings where feasible
QFA	Pot1: Cork, Donegal Pot 2: Two Winners from 4A Draw shall be made to determine the two pairings. Subject to the avoidance of Repeat Pairings where feasible – Pot 1 v Pot 2
SFA	QFA Winner v QFA Winner i.e Cork/ Rd 4A Winner v Donegal/Rd4A Winner

1B	Pot1: Cavan, Derry, Armagh, Wicklow, Offaly, London, Tipperary, Carlow An open draw shall then be made to determine the four pairings
2B	Pot1: Kildare, Tyrone, Leitrim, Kerry Pot 2: Four Winners from Pot 1B A Draw shall be made to determine the four pairings – Pot 1 v Pot 2
3B	Pot1: Four Winners from 2B Draw shall be made to determine the two pairings. Subject to the avoidance of Repeat Pairings where feasible
4B	Pot1: Meath, Sligo Pot 2: Two Winners from 3B Draw shall be made to determine the two pairings. Subject to the avoidance of Repeat Pairings where feasible – Pot 1 v Pot 2
QFB	Pot1: Dublin, Mayo Pot 2: Two Winners from 4B Draw shall be made to determine the two pairings. Subject to the avoidance of Repeat Pairings where feasible – Pot 1 v Pot 2
SFB	QFB Winner v QFB Winner i.e. Dublin/Rd4B Winner v Mayo/RD 4B Winner

All Ireland Final

Semi Final A Winner v Semi Final B Winner

Munster		
QF	Limerick v Waterford	Tipperary v Kerry
SF	Clare V Limerick	Cork V Kerry
Final	Cork v Clare	

Connacht			
QF	Sligo V New York	Roscommon V Galway	London V Leitrim
SF	Sligo v Galway		Mayo v Leitrim
Final	Sligo V Mayo		

In the example above, teams are initially drawn in either the Orange or Green sides of their Provincial Championships; once eliminated from the Provincial Championships, they can only be drawn against teams from the corresponding (orange or green) sides of their own or other provinces in the All Ireland Qualifiers.

In effect therefore, the Provincial Championship draw each October will determine what “side” of the qualifier draw a losing provincial team will find themselves on the following summer.

It is important to note that the All Ireland quarter finals each year will now be on an arranged basis – i.e. the respective Provincial champions annually will be limited in terms of who they can meet in the All Ireland Quarter final. As per the current proposal, in 2014 the Munster & Connacht champions will be limited to meeting one of the winners from Round 4a only; the Ulster and Leinster champions will be limited to meeting the winners from Round 4b.

It is proposed that a Provincial rota system will be determined by Central Council to address this issue for subsequent years. The provisions for achieving this are included in the Congress motion with C.C.C.C being asked to inform Ard Chomhairle on an annual basis, and before the Provincial Championship draws take place, as to which Provincial Champions will be paired with the Round 4a winners and which with the Round 4b winners in the following year’s championship.

5. Effects of this change

Should the Congress motion be passed, it is envisaged that the following benefits will accrue:

- The 6 day turnaround for beaten provincial finalists will be abolished (unless a Provincial Final ends in a draw)
- 3-4 weeks will be the maximum any team has to wait for their next game in the championship
- There will be a better & more even spread of games generally each weekend with potential for increased attendance and media coverage
- The entire proposal should facilitate better fixture planning at club level within counties.

However, it is also important to note that if this proposal is passed:

- It will halve the number of teams a county can potentially meet in the qualifiers
- Lead to a greater risk of repeat fixtures in the football Championship annually (increases the possibility of Counties meeting a team in the qualifiers that they have previously met in the provincial championship)
- Limit scheduling options for C.C.C.C at both national level and in terms of the scheduling of the Provincial championships (it may not be possible to accede to requests from Counties to “avoid” playing on certain weekends in the championship due to other local events etc). The order in which games will be played will have to be strictly as per the scheduling proposal.
- It will impact on the TV Contract as currently constituted – i.e. it will limit CCCC’s options in terms of what games can be provided for live TV Coverage; all of the “attractive” games in the Qualifiers could be taking place on the one weekend with no appropriate TV game on the following weekend due to the “split” nature of the qualifier route,.

Appendix I – Wording of NFPC Scheduling Motion to Congress 2013

Amend Rial 6.27 (A) as follows:

Organisation

The Championships shall be organised as follows:

(A) All-Ireland Senior Football Championship

(i) Provincial Championships

These Championships shall be played on a Knock Out Format. A 'Round Robin' Format may not be used. The winners of the Provincial Championships shall qualify for separate All-Ireland Championship Quarter-Finals.

Provincial championship draws shall be made on an arranged basis with an "A" and a "B" side to each draw. Teams on the "A" side of a Provincial draw shall enter the All Ireland Qualifier Series as appropriate at Rounds 1A – 4A only. Teams on the "B" side of a Provincial draw shall enter the All Ireland Qualifier Series as appropriate at Rounds 1B – 4B only

(ii) All-Ireland Qualifier Series

Round 1A - This Round shall include all the Counties in the "A" side of Provincial Championships that do not qualify for Provincial SemiFinals. A Preliminary Game(s) if required and which may be on an arranged basis, shall be played to reduce the number of teams to eight. An open draw shall then be made to determine the four pairings.

Round 1B - This Round shall include all the Counties in the "B" side of Provincial Championships that do not qualify for Provincial SemiFinals. A Preliminary Game(s) if required and which may be on an arranged basis, shall be played to reduce the number of teams to eight. An open draw shall then be made to determine the four pairings.

Round 2A - Each of the four teams defeated in the "A" side of Provincial Semi-Finals shall play against one of the four winners from Round 1A. A Draw shall be made to determine the four pairings.

Round 2B - Each of the four teams defeated in the "B" side of Provincial Semi-Finals shall play against one of the four winners from Round 1B. A Draw shall be made to determine the four pairings.

Round 3A - This Round shall involve the four winners of Round 2A. Subject to the avoidance of Repeat Pairings where feasible, a Draw shall be made to determine the two pairings.

Round 3B - This Round shall involve the four winners of Round 2B. Subject to the avoidance of Repeat Pairings where feasible, a Draw shall be made to determine the two pairings.

Round 4A - Each of two defeated Provincial Finalists* shall play against one of the two winners from Round 3A. Subject to the avoidance of Repeat Pairings where feasible, a Draw shall be made to determine the two pairings.

Round 4B - Each of two defeated Provincial Finalists* shall play against one of the two winners from Round 3B. A Subject to the avoidance of Repeat Pairings where feasible, a Draw shall be made to determine the two pairings.

*In 2014 the defeated Munster & Connacht finalists will enter Round 4A; the defeated Ulster and Leinster finalists will enter Round 4B. In subsequent years, once the dates for the respective Provincial Finals are agreed & before September 30th of the previous year, the C.C.C.C will inform Ard Chomhairle as to which beaten provincial finalists will enter Round 4A and which will enter Round 4B in the following year's championship.

(iii) All-Ireland Quarter-Finals

The All Ireland Quarter Finals shall be on an arranged basis.

Subject to the respective Provincial Champions not meeting the defeated finalists from their own Province in this Round and to the avoidance of repeat pairings where possible, two nominated Provincial Champions* shall be paired against the Winners of Round 4A and two nominated Provincial Champions” shall be paired against the Winners of Round 4B

*In 2014 the Munster & Connacht Champions will be paired with the Round 4A winners; the Ulster and Leinster Champions will be paired with the Round 4B winners. In subsequent years, once the dates for the respective Provincial Finals are agreed & before September 30th of the previous year, the C.C.C will inform Ard Chomhairle as to which Provincial Champions will be paired with the Round 4A winners and which will be paired with the Round 4B winners in the following year’s championship

(iv) All-Ireland Semi-Finals

A Provincial Rota system initially determined by Central Council, shall apply. If a Provincial Championship winning team is defeated in its Quarter-Final, the team that defeats it shall take its place in the Semi-Final.

(v) All-Ireland Final.

Other matters related to the All-Ireland Qualifier Series

(1) Scheduling

Qualifier Games shall be played on Saturdays/Sundays as deemed appropriate by the Central Competitions Control Committee, but the Schedule of Games shall avoid conflict with the Provincial Championships schedules (including Replays), and shall also allow sufficient dates for Club Championship fixtures. Consideration shall be given to the dual involvement of Counties in both Hurling and Football, and, where feasible, avoid the same weekend.

Provincial Runners-Up shall be allowed, where feasible, a thirteen day gap between their Provincial Final and their participation in the AllIreland Qualifier Series.

All Games in each Round of the All-Ireland Qualifier Series shall be played over not more than two consecutive weekends, save in exceptional circumstances.

(2) Venues

Home Venues shall be used in Rounds 1, 2 and 3 of the All-Ireland Qualifier Series, with the first Team drawn having Home Advantage.

Exceptions:

(i) If a County did not have Home Advantage in the First Round of the previous year’s Qualifier Series, it shall have Home Advantage in the First Round of the current year’s Qualifier Series.

(ii) If the two Counties in a pairing did not have Home Advantage in the First Round of the previous year’s Qualifier Series, a toss shall determine which County will have the Home Advantage in the First Round of the current year’s Qualifier Series .

The above arrangements shall be conditional on Home Grounds being deemed to meet the criteria set down by the **National Health and Safety Committee** and the Central Competitions Control Committee. Venues in Round 4 shall be determined by the Central Competitions Control Committee.

All-Ireland Quarter-Finals Scheduling

Save for replays and exceptional circumstances provided for in Rule 6.28(a), all games in the All-Ireland Quarter-Finals shall be played over not more than two consecutive weekends and shall be completed by the second weekend in August.

Appendix II

How the 2012 Hurling and Football Championships Would have been scheduled had such a motion been in place IN 2012.

FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP												HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP			
Date Week		Munster	Leinster	Qualifiers				Ulster		Connacht		Leinster	Qualifiers	Munster	
06-May	1											Leinster	Qualifiers		
13-May	2														
20-May	3											LP1	LP2	MQF	
27-May	4		WH v LH LD v LS					CN v DL				LQ1			
03-Jun	5		MH v WW					MN v AM	FH v DN			LQ2	LQ3	MS1	
10-Jun	6	WD v LK	L/L v W/L v D WX					AH v TE		LN v LM				MS2	
17-Jun	7	KY v TN	M/W v CW OY v KE					DY v CN/DL		GY v RN		LS1	LS2	P1	P2
24-Jun	8	CE v W/L	W/L/D v L/W	1a	1a	1a	1a	M/A v A/T		MO v L/L				Phase I Phase I	
01-Jul	9	CK v K/T	M/W/C v O/K	1b 1b 1b 1b				C/D/D v F/D		SO v G/R		Final		Phase II Phase II	
08-Jul	10			2a	2a	2a	2a							Phase III	
15-Jul	11	Final	Final	3a		3a		Final		Final				All Ireland Series	
22-Jul	12													AIQ1 AIQ2	
29-Jul	13			4a		4a								AIS1	
05-Aug	14		AIQ1	AIQ2				4b	4b					AIS2	
12-Aug	15							AIQ3	AIQ4					AIF	
19-Aug	16														
26-Aug	17		AIS1	All-Ireland Series											
02-Sep	18							AIS2							
09-Sep	19														
16-Sep	20														
23-Sep	21						AIF								